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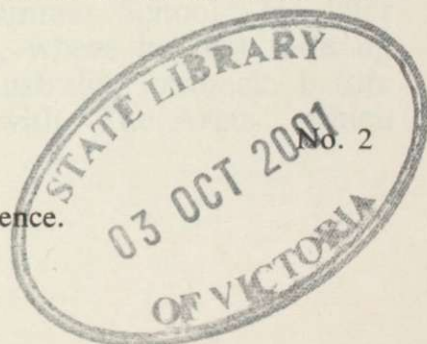
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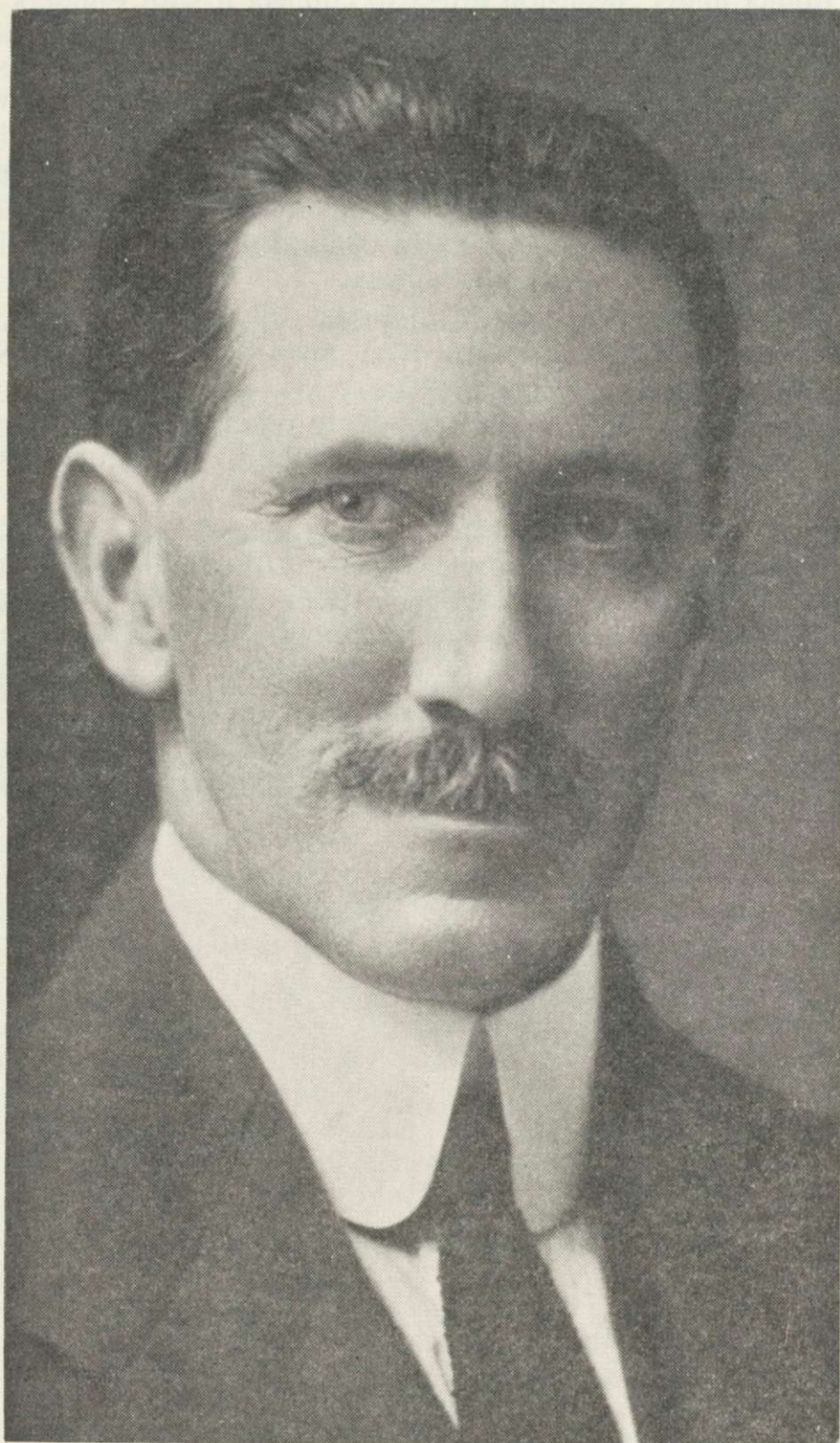
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TOORAK HOUSE IN TOORAK.

Once the residence of the early Governors of Victoria, and now occupied by the Swedish Church.



EDWARD EDGAR PESCOTT,
1872-1954.

Edward Edgar Pescott, 1872-1954

By Ian F. McLaren, O.B.E., Dip. Com., F.C.A., F.R.H.S.V.*

(An Address to the City of Camberwell Historical Society on
Friday Evening, 1st May, 1964.)

INTRODUCTION

This is the story of an Australian who was school teacher, principal and civil servant, as well as naturalist, botanist, horticulturalist, ethnologist, author, historian and book collector.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

The ship *Shalimar* (Captain R. T. Brown, 1,402 tons) sailed from Liverpool on 16th August, 1857, and arrived at Geelong on 11th November, 1857.¹ Included among the passengers were Thomas Trewhett Pescott, aged 29, his wife Mary Ann (nee Dean), aged 24, and three young children, Elizabeth (1853-1918), Mary Ann (1855-1869), and Thomas Blenkinsop Shalimar (1857-1878), who was born at sea. They travelled with the Edgar family, whose name was to be included in those given to the subject of this paper.

Thomas Pescott was a cabinet-maker and joiner; he was encouraged to emigrate to Australia by a relative because of the great demand for his trade at the gold diggings of Victoria. The Pescotts remained in Geelong, living in Clarendon Street, Chilwell, then shortly afterwards in Latrobe Terrace, Chilwell, after which they occupied a large two-storey house in McKillop Street, Geelong.²

Thomas Pescott's services were much in demand and he earned 12/- per day at his trade. Many buildings in the Geelong district were erected by him over the succeeding years, including the Mercantile Bank (1888), the Coffee Palace at Ocean Grove (1888)³, the Queens Bridge in Queens Park, and many others. The fourth generation operated the building business of Pescott & Sons in McKillop Street, Geelong. Thomas Pescott was a director of the Chilwell Gold Mining Company formed in 1878,⁴ but it was unsuccessful.

Thomas Pescott was closely associated with the Noble Street Methodist Church in Geelong, became a trustee in 1875, and was superintendent of the Sunday School from 1878 to 1881.⁵ He had an intense love of nature, which he transmitted to his son Edward and other members of the family; Edward dedicated *The Native*

* Mr. McLaren is a past president of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and a current member of the Council of this Society.—Editor.

1 Shipping Records, Archives, State Library of Victoria.

2 *Geelong Advertiser*, 19th January, 1929. This last residence was later removed to make way for the railway to the Western District.

3 *The History of Ocean Grove*, by R. G. Edwards (1952) p. 22.

4 *Geelong Advertiser*, 19th January, 1929.

5 *Geelong Advertiser*, 19th April, 1930. See also Jubilee and Centenary histories of Noble Street Methodist Church.

Flowers of Victoria "to the memory of My Father who, through his innate love of the beautiful in nature, first led me into Nature's bypaths." Thomas Trehwett Pescott died on 29th August, 1910.

The other children of Thomas and Mary Pescott born in Geelong were:

Fannie (1860-1944), whose married name was Purvis.

David James (1862-1947),⁶ builder, of Geelong.

George William (1864-1955)⁶, also a builder, of Geelong.

James Richard (1866-1957), who served with the Department of Agriculture and became secretary of the Closer Settlement Board.

Lilian Jane (1868-1959), whose married name was Morriss.

Joseph Dene (1869-1917), one of whose sons, Richard Thomas Martin, was director of the National Museum of Victoria (1944-1957) and has been Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens and Government Botanist since 1957.

Edward Edgar (1872-1954), the subject of this paper.

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF EDWARD EDGAR PESCOTT

Edward Edgar Pescott was born at Geelong on 11th December, 1872. He was educated at the Chilwell State School and appointed to this school as a junior teacher on 1st November, 1888.⁷ He then taught successively at Watta Wella (Stawell district), Willenabrina East and Cannum West (both Warracknabeal district), again at Chilwell, and Brit Brit and Tahara Bridge (both Coleraine district). He was licensed to teach music on 19th June, 1893.

He was already interested in natural history, and during the 1890s won the gold medal of the Geelong Field Naturalists' Club for work on grasses, as well as a silver medal for similar work on ferns.⁸ He passed a science examination in agriculture on 20th December, 1899. He was appointed head teacher at Jarrahmond, near Orbost, from April, 1899. Between 1899 and 1901 he made several visits to the Snowy River "Jungle", which had to be approached by river steamer owned by R. P. Cameron,⁹ and made an extensive collection of native flora, which is now held in the National Herbarium, Melbourne. In 1899 he met the Government Entomologist, Charles French, Jnr.¹⁰, who encouraged him to transfer on 1st July, 1901, to the Department of Agriculture, as an inspector serving in the Orchard Branch.

Pescott was stationed at Shepparton, where he met Samuel Furphy and his family. Furphy was an authority on the aborigines and had assisted Baron von Mueller¹¹ in the identification of plants and speci-

6 See *Noble Street Methodist Church and Sunday School*, 1849-1949.

7 *Geelong Advertiser*, 6th November, 1937.

8 However, he was not a member of this club. See *Victorian Naturalist*, vol. 62, January, 1945, p. 32.

9 *Victorian Naturalist*, vol. 61, February, 1945, p. 181.

10 *Victorian Naturalist*, vol. 67, November, 1950, p. 148.

11 Miles Franklin and Kete Baker, *Joseph Furphy*, Syd., 1944, p. 7.

mens. Samuel Furphy's son Joseph was the author of *Such Is Life*, whilst another son, John, was the inventor of many farm implements, including the famed mobile water tank used extensively during World War I, especially in Egypt and the Middle East. John was also the author of *The Federation of the World*.¹² Edward Edgar Pescott married John's daughter, Violet Jane, on 24th May, 1906, at Shepparton.

It was during this period that he probably met Kate Baker, a school-teacher, who resided with the Furphy's and encouraged Joseph to publish *Such Is Life*. It was a stimulating and exciting period for the young Pescott.

After a transfer from Shepparton to Ivanhoe with the Department of Agriculture, Pescott was appointed in 1909 as Principal of the Burnley School of Horticulture, and remained in this post until 22nd September, 1916.¹³ Among the innovations introduced during this period was the furthering of the principle of utilising native species for ornamental gardening and for large-scale park and reserve planting. In fact, he was one of the earliest lecturers on the subject of cultivating native plants. He supported his talks with a fine collection of slides, photographed by himself, as well as planning courses for the Certificate of Competency in Horticulture.¹⁴ He commenced gardening courses for women. He remained a part-time lecturer in botany at the school until 1939.

The Government proposed in 1916 to expand the curriculum of the school by including a School of Primary Agriculture.¹⁵ In September, 1916, Pescott was appointed Government Pomologist and Seed Tester in the Victorian Department of Agriculture. He travelled widely throughout the State. He was closely associated with the Pomological Committee of Australia, as witness his reports on their meetings contained in the *Journal of the Department of Agriculture*. This journal also contains many articles by him on apples, pears, asparagus, nuts, etc.¹⁶ He acted as relieving curator of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens from 28th November, 1921, to 26th September, 1922. With the introduction of radio broadcasting in the early 1920's, he presented more than 100 consecutive weekly broadcasts on native flora. For several years he was the director or organiser of the Wildflower and Wild Nature Shows held in the Melbourne or St. Kilda town halls. He was a recognised authority on orchids and acacias. The orchid *Chiloglottis Pescottiana* (Rogers) was named after him in 1917.¹⁷ He

12 Melbourne, E. W. Cole, n.d.

13 See *Journal Dep. Agric.*, vol. VIII, nos. 1 (Jan.) and 6 (Jun.), 1910, for description of Burnley School by Pescott.

14 See letter dated 7th February, 1911, to Secretary, Dept. of Agric. (File 11.4984); also *Argus and Age*, 6th September, 1911.

15 See *Argus*, 1st and 22nd August, 1916; *Australasian*, 19th August, 1916; *Fruit World*, 1st August, 1916.

16 A list of articles has been prepared, but is too extensive for publication here.

17 See *Victorian Naturalist*, vol. 62, January, 1946, p. 166, describing the naming of this orchid.

gained a fellowship of the Linnean Society, London. Pescott remained with the Department until his retirement on 11th December, 1937.

The family home at 35 Seymour Grove, Camberwell, was occupied in 1917. Mr. Pescott was associated with the Camberwell Methodist Church, of which he became a trustee. Mr. and Mrs. Pescott left by the *Orion* for a visit to Britain on 28th March, 1939.

During the depression of the 1930's the Victorian State Relief Committee was formed to assist the unemployed. Mr. Pescott was Deputy Chairman of the Committee from 1934 to 1945 and Chairman 1945-1954.

He continued his many interests until his death on 31st July, 1954. He was survived by Mrs. Pescott (who died in 1956) and three children, Jack, May (Mrs. Owen Johns) and Neil.

ORGANISATIONS

Australian Wattle Day League. This League began in 1889¹⁸ to encourage the acceptance of the wattle blossom as the national floral emblem of Australia, the love of native flora, and to stimulate Australian national sentiment. The movement was revived in 1909, with E. E. Pescott acting as secretary of the Victorian division from 1910 to 1920. Steps were taken to form a federal movement, with Pescott as first honorary secretary and treasurer from 1912 to 1922. The first federal conference was held at the Melbourne Town Hall on 8th January, 1913. It was in this year that wattle was shown on Australian postage stamps, due largely to the work of the League. The documents of this movement were preserved by Mr. Pescott and are at the State Library of Victoria.¹⁹ This was a widely popular movement which won general acceptance of wattle blossom as our national emblem. The first wattle excursion to Hurstbridge was organised on 31st August, 1912.²⁰

Horticulture. Mr. Pescott was president of the Victorian Horticultural Society from 1912 to 1917. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society. He was also a member of the Cactus and Succulent Society and the Victorian Orchid Club. He compiled an indexed notebook of horticultural biographies.²¹

Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria. The fine obituary by George N. Hyam in the *Victorian Naturalist*²² gives an outline of the contribution made by Mr. Pescott to this Club. He joined it in 1913, with a keen interest in preservation and the botanical study of native flowers. This is evidenced by some 32 contributions to the *Victorian Naturalist* over the years from 1915 to 1946.²³ The earlier articles

¹⁸ See *Australian Wattle Day League: Outline History*, by Will J. Sowden. (Adel., 1913.)

¹⁹ Mss Box 131A.

²⁰ See *Punch*, 12th September, 1912.

²¹ Box 131/3, H.17353, State Library of Victoria.

²² Vol. 72, March, 1955, pp. 166-8.

²³ These have been listed, but are too numerous to publish here. However, several of the more important papers have been referred to in this paper.

are on orchids, including his first contribution with Charles French, Jnr., on *A year among the orchids*.²⁴ This reported on the first regular collection of Australian orchids.

He was appointed honorary secretary in 1920 and was president from 1926 to 1928; during this time the Wildflower and Native Plant Protection Act was passed by the Victorian Parliament following representations made by the Club for legislative protection of flora.²⁵ *The Orchids of Victoria* was published in the *Victorian Naturalist* during 1926 and 1927,²⁶ and his report as expedition leader in 1928 was similarly published as a special supplement entitled "Report of . . . the expedition through the Western District of Victoria."²⁷ One of his major contributions was the history of the Club published in 1940.²⁸ This was supplemented by his story of the census of the plants of Victoria.²⁹ His interests extended to birds.³⁰ He was granted an honorary life membership of the Club in 1947.

Royal Historical Society of Victoria. From his interests in natural history Mr. Pescott turned to book collecting and Australian history. He joined the Society in 1929 and remained a member until his death. He contributed two outstanding papers to *The Victorian Historical Magazine*, on *The Pioneers of Horticulture in Victoria*³¹ and *The Writings of Daniel Bunce*³².

Book Collector and Author. Edward Pescott was an avid collector of books relating to natural history and Australian history. His collection of natural history books covered the subject generally as well as the Australian field. The major part of his library was divided among his family, a few books were selected by the National Herbarium, and the balance offered for sale in 1956 by N. H. Seward Pty. Ltd., in their 24-page list entitled *Books from the Library of the Late E. E. Pescott*.

He made one of the finest collections of the works of James Bonwick available, having most of the 108 works by this author, listed in the limited edition of 250 copies of his *James Bonwick, a writer of school books and histories, with a bibliography of his writings*.³³ This was followed by the reprinting in 1942 of a limited edition of 250 copies of Bonwick's *Notes of a gold digger and gold diggers' guide*, with an introduction by Pescott.³⁴

Mr. Pescott also had fine collections of first editions of Rolf Boldrewood, Marcus Clark, Joseph Furphy and other authors; his

24 *Victorian Naturalist*, vol. XXXII, 1915, pp. 75-80.

25 See *Victorian Naturalist*, vol. XLVIII, 1931, pp. 18-19.

26 Op. Cit., vol. XLIII, 1926, pp. 137-145, ff.

27 Op. Cit., vol. XLV, October, 1928, pp. 1-25.

28 Op. Cit., vol. LVII, May, 1940, pp. 4-31.

29 Op. Cit., vol. 62, April, 1946, pp. 237-9.

30 See *The Literature of Australian Birds*, by R. M. Whittall (Perth, 1954), p. 584.

31 *Victorian Historical Magazine*, vol. 18, 1940, pp. 1-32.

32 Op. Cit., vol. 23, 1950, pp. 115-125. Pescott had considered extending this work.

33 Melbourne, 1939.

34 Melbourne, 1942.

other fields of collecting included Daniel Bunce, anthropology, shipwrecks, local history, bookplates and books printed in and about Geelong, the illustrated books of S. T. Gill, and a wide and catholic coverage of various aspects of early Australian books.

With his strong associations with the Furphy family he was interested in Joseph Furphy. In 1938 he published *The Life Story of Joseph Furphy*³⁵, with an introduction by Kate Baker. This included a bibliography and list of unpublished manuscripts. The edition of 75 copies was hand set and hand printed by Hawthorn Press, with most copies going to libraries. They are signed by E. E. Pescott, Kate Baker, John Gartner and J. K. Moir. He was secretary of the Joseph Furphy committee for the publication of a memorial volume.³⁶

In *Across the Years: the Lure of Early Australian Books* Pescott contributed a chapter on *Victoriana*.³⁷ This covered many of the volumes in his own library, including Bonwick. The author's copy bears Pescott's 1942 bookplate; this edition was limited to 650 copies, and it has been said that 600 were sold before publication.

He showed great interest in Baron Ferdinand von Mueller and his cuttings, photographs, etc., are contained in *Reliquae Muelleriana* at the National Herbarium. One of his earlier bibliographical contributions was *Notes on Mueller's Literary Work* in the *Victorian Naturalist* in January, 1922.³⁸

One of Pescott's earliest publications was *A Census of the Genus Acacia in Australia*.³⁹ This was his thesis prepared for submission for fellowship of the Linnean Society, London. In the same year he published *The Native Flowers of Victoria*, with four coloured plates by Herbert Dickens.

After World War I, Whitcombe & Tombs included several works in their Australian Gardening Handbooks series — *Bulb Growing*, *Gardening in Australia*, *Rose Growing*, and *The Dahlia in Australia*. Then came *The Orchids of Victoria*,⁴⁰ recording and describing the 137 species.

Reference has already been made to his contributions to *The Victorian Historical Magazine*. The Nurserymen and Seedsmen's Association of Victoria reissued *Pioneers of Horticulture in Victoria* as a souvenir issue, with acknowledgement to Mr. Pescott on the inside front cover.

In addition to several introductions to books, Mr. Pescott contributed widely to the *Field Naturalist*, *Journal of the Department*

³⁵ Melbourne, 1938.

³⁶ For records, correspondence and notes of Furphy, refer Box 131/3 — H17352, State Library of Victoria.

³⁷ Melbourne, 1948, pp. 61-72.

³⁸ Vol. XXXVIII, pp. 98-102.

³⁹ NP.,/1914/.

⁴⁰ Melb., 1928. See also *Victorian Naturalist*, vol. XLIII, pt. 5, ff.

of *Agriculture, Stock and Land*⁴¹ and other journals already mentioned.

He was an active member of the Bread and Cheese Club.

A list of his publications is shown in the bibliography.

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- Australian Flowers for Australian Gardens*. Read at various Horticultural Societies in Victoria, 1911-1912. Melb., F. W. Niven, /1912/.
- A Census of the Genus Acacia in Australia*. N.P., /1914/. 200 copies printed and issued privately.
- The Native Flowers of Victoria*. Melb., Geo. Robertson, /1914/.
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- A New Species of Orchid: Caladenia Hildae*, n.s.p. Reprinted from *Victorian Naturalist*, January, 1929. Note—Pescott was the co-author of this species, which has now been superseded.
- Wild Flowers of Australia*. Published by the Shell Co. of Australia. Melb., N.P. /1929/. Also in de luxe edition.
- The Life Story of Joseph Furphy*. Melb., Hawthorn Press, 1938. Limited to 75 signed copies.
- James Bonwick: a writer of school books and histories; with a bibliography of his writings*. Melb., H. A. Evans, 1939. Limited to 250 signed copies.
- New Way Gardening—A Home Beautiful Handbook for Amateurs* (with Charles Barrett). Melb., United Press, n.d.
- The Pioneers of Horticulture in Victoria*, in Special Horticultural Number, *Victorian Historical Magazine*, vol. XVIII, no. 1, February, 1940.

41 Including a long series entitled *Botany for Farmers*.

Nurserymen and Seedsmen's Association of Victoria, Inc. Souvenir of the Pioneers of Horticulture in Victoria. Reprint of previous item from *Victorian Historical Magazine*.

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* * * * *

Contributions, Introductions, Forewords, etc.

Note: These do not include contributions to the *Victorian Naturalist*, *Journal of the Department of Agriculture* (other than several reprinted and listed above) and to many journals and newspapers.

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Notes of a gold digger and gold diggers' guide, by James Bonwick, Melb., Hawthorn Press, 1942. Introduction by Pescott.

Water conservation and Australia's eventual population, by A. O. Barrett. NP, 1945. With introduction by Pescott.

Victoriana, by E. E. Pescott, in *Across the Years: the Lure of Early Australian Books*. Melb., N. H. Seward, 1948.

Australia's Queen of Blossoms: The Golden Wattle, by E. E. Pescott, in *Golden Wattle all the year round*, Mrs. F. Caley Smith, Aldgate, Adel., Vardon & Sons, n.d.

The Grampians, by A. J. Relph, with an introduction by E. E. Pescott. Melb., Whitcombe & Tombs, n.d.

Tom Collins, Joseph Furphy as I knew him, with addendum by E. E. Pescott, Melb., Bread & Cheese Club, 1941.

* * * * *

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FELLOWS OF THE ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

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1953—Mr. G. R. Leggett, B.A.*
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1954—Mr. H. S. McComb, L.S.,
F.R.I.C.S.
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1958—Mr. A. J. Hopton, O.B.E.,
B.A., Dip. Ed.*

1960—Mr. P. L. Brown, B.A.
Dr. Colin Macdonald

1962—Mr. Noel Learmonth.
Dr. R. R. Wettenhall.

* Deceased.



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6. A margin of at least 1½ inches should be allowed at the left hand side of each page and of 2 inches at the top.
7. References to books in bibliographies, footnotes, etc., should give the correct name of the author, the full and correct title of the book, and the publisher's name and the city in which the publication was made and the date it was published.
e.g. The Upton Letters, by A. C. Benson (John Murray, London, 1926), p. 10.
8. Orders for reprints and additional copies of the journal should be forwarded to the Editor at the time that contributions are submitted for publication.
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